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ABSTRACT

This study attempted to determine what difference, if any, participation in adult basic education (ABE) programs makes in the lives of undereducated adults. The nature of the impact was examined on two dimensions: (1) the qualitative impact in terms of changes in the quality of student lives and (2) the financial impact in terms of changes in the financial well-being of students. Data were gathered through interviews with a random sample of 190 students who had left an ABE program within the five years prior to the study. (These samples represent about 10 percent of the current student population and 5 percent of former students.) Analysis of the data showed that the qualitative impact of the ABE programs was positive. Most of the former students had achieved their self-listed goals, such as enrolling in further education. Students also reported substantial improvement in basic skills, applied practical knowledge, community participation, and involvement in their children's education. In most cases, students attributed these benefits to their participation in an ABE program. The study further showed that the major benefits from the ABE program are realized after the student has left. In the area of financial impact, former students reported some gains in personal income, while current students' income did not increase. These findings suggest that time is needed for students to find employment and make changes in their lives. In addition, the cost/benefit ratio of program completers was highly positive. Therefore, the evidence presented in this study strongly indicates that adult basic education programs are effective and are beneficial to both the students and to society in a variety of important ways. (KC)

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ABE Evaluation Project
Final Report

IMPACT EVALUATION OF ADULT BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAM OUTCOMES

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Department of Educational Services
College of Education
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Bozeman, Montana
August, 1983

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The statements or contents of this report do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Division of Adult Education, Office of Public Instruction, State of Montana.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION	1
Background and Need for the Study	1
Review of Selected Literature	2
Problem Statement	10
Assumptions of the Study	10
Limitations of the Study	10
Definition of Terms	11
References Cited	12
Chapter 2: METHODOLOGY	15
Study Design	15
Sample	16
Instrument Development	22
Data Collection	23
Chapter 3: DATA SUMMARY AND PRESENTATION	25
Student Goals and Achievement	25
Qualitative Impact on Students' Lives	29
Knowledge, Skills and Community Participation	29
Impact on Educational Attitudes and Activities	40
Impact on Personal Lives	48
Financial Impact on Students' Lives	56
Student Income	56
Program Costs	64
Cost/Benefit Analysis	66
Student Evaluations of ABE Programs	68
Chapter 4: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	71
Qualitative Impact	71
Financial Impact	72
Costs vs. Benefits	74
Summary Conclusions	76
Recommendations	77
APPENDICES	
Appendix A: Letter to Students	78
Appendix B: Interview Instruments	80

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figures

Page

1 - Sites, Enrollments and Sample Sizes for ABE Programs Used in the Study. 17

Tables

1 - Summary of Demographic Information for the Sample Interviewed. 20

2 - Main Reason Given for Attending the ABE Program 26

3 - Student Reported Importance of the Main Reason Given for Attending the ABE Program. 27

4 - Student Reported Achievement of Personal Goals During ABE Program Attendance 28

5 - Student Perceived Improvement in Basic Skill Areas Resulting from ABE Program Attendance 30

6 - Student Perceived Improvement in Basic Knowledge Areas Resulting from ABE Program Attendance 32

7 - Student Perceived Increased Likelihood to Participate in, or Become Involved With Various Activities or Services of the Community Resulting from ABE Program Attendance. 34

8 - Student Perceived Increased Likelihood to Become Involved in School Activities Regarding their Childrens' Education Resulting from ABE Program Attendance. 36

9 - Student Perceived Direction and Magnitude of Overall Changes in Basic Skills, Knowledge and Community Involvement Resulting from ABE Program Attendance. 38

10 - Student Perceived Factors Associated with ABE Program Attendance Which Were at Least Partially Responsible for Overall Changes in Basic Skills and Knowledge 39

11 - Enrollment in Other Educational Programs Subsequent to Beginning Attendance in the ABE Program (Current Students) or to Terminating Attendance in the ABE Program (Former Students) 40

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES -- Continued

Tables

Page

12 - Status of Current and Former ABE Students Having Enrolled in other Educational Programs Subsequent to Beginning Attendance in the ABE Program (Current Students) or Terminating Attendance in the ABE Program (Former Students) 42

13 - Student Perceived Influence Attending the ABE Program had on Their Desire to Enroll in Other Educational Programs. 44

14 - Student Reported Reasons for not Having Enrolled in any Additional Educational Programs. 45

15 - Student Reported Intentions to Enroll in Additional Educational Programs 47

16 - Direction and Magnitude of Student Perceived Changes in Their Personal Lives Between when They First Began Attending the ABE Program and the Time of the Interview 49

17 - Student Perceived Changes in Their School Age Children Resulting from the Students' Attendance in the ABE Program. 51

18 - Student Perceived Direction and Magnitude of Overall Change in Their Personal Lives Resulting from ABE Program Attendance 53

19 - Student Perceived Factors Associated with ABE Program Attendance which were at Least Partially Responsible for Overall Changes in Students' Personal Lives. 55

20 - Students Reporting Having Received Government Financial Assistance. 57

21 - Student Perceived Ways in which Attending the ABE Program has Helped Reduce Dependence on Government Financial Assistance. 58

22 - Student Employment Status, Employment Income and Total Family Income. 59

23 - Net Change in Student Reported Income from Time of Enrollment in the ABE Program to Time of Interview 61

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES -- Continued

Tables

Page

24 - Student Reported Changes in Overall Condition of Family Finances Since Enrolling in the ABE Program. 63

25 - Actual Program Cost Per Student Hour of Instruction 64

26 - Hours of ABE Program Instruction for Current and Former students Interviewed 65

27 - Ratios of Net Income Changes for Individual Students and for Families to ABE Program Costs. 66

28 - Student Evaluation Comments Regarding the ABE Program They Attended 69

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John Mahaffy

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Background and Need for the Study

The numbers of undereducated adults in the United States are vast. Millions are totally illiterate, 20% are estimated to lack the skills and knowledge necessary for functional competence (U. of Texas, 15), and many more are undereducated in a variety of ways.

Adult educators, rightly, are concerned with rapidly advancing technology and with continuing education needs people face merely to "keep up." As many find themselves bewildered by technological advances, social changes, the explosion of information and increased demands just to remain competent in their chosen occupations, adults who cannot read or who dropped out of school in the fourth grade may understandably be pessimistic about the future. Interestingly, though, such adults are markedly inventive and adaptive; most find a way to get by. Even so, their needs are many and apparent, and their futures need not be viewed as hopeless.

Federal, state and local agencies work together in an effort to provide educational opportunities for undereducated adults to better their lives materially, intellectually and psychologically. Are these efforts successful? Certainly many measures of improved reading levels and mathematical skills, for example, have been demonstrated. The more fundamental question, and the primary one this study addressed, is "What difference, if any, does participation in adult education

programs make in the lives of undereducated adults?" Clearly, This study cannot provide the final answer to that question, but it does add to a body of knowledge on the impact such programs have on students' lives and on whether the benefits derived from the programs are worth the cost.

Review of Selected Literature

Most adult education programs serving undereducated adults include the improvement of basic knowledge and skill areas as part of their curricula. Students perceive such gains to be highly significant. In a Maryland study of 120 currently enrolled students, interviewers found 63% of students reported significant gains in consumer skills, while 76%, 81% and 90% of students perceived gains in reading, writing and math respectively. (Walker, 18) A 1979 Wisconsin study focused on students after they had left the program. Many of these students reported gains in the same areas as those reported in the Maryland study, although in smaller percentages. Additional areas of improvement reported by students in the Wisconsin study were: health knowledge, occupational knowledge and use of community resources. (Hole, 9) Some studies used testing procedures to document skill improvement, instead of relying on student reporting. (Fallon, 4) The United States Department of Education attempted to quantify national skill improvement; they documented the findings in a 1980 report. The report stated that, as a result of attending adult basic education (ABE) programs or general education development (GED) preparatory programs, 75% of the students could read better, 69% had improved math

skills and 84% now had an improved self-concept. (U.S. Dept. of Education, 17)

Some adult educators, however, strongly advocate the use of other measures to determine the benefits to students and to determine the value of their programs. Tests of gains in skill and knowledge areas are not necessarily the only valid measures of the ultimate worth of the program. (Fischer & Evanson, 5) In a study evaluating literacy programs in the military, Larson reported finding that general reading ability was not a significant factor in job training performance, although attainment of specific literacy skills did have some positive effects on job training performance. (Larson, 12) As a result of the study, literacy skills were integrated into the job training program. Measuring skill improvement alone would not uncover this kind of synergistic effect.

While the goals of many programs may concern the happiness, welfare and productivity of students who attend, the programs' objectives often are stated in terms of measurable skill and knowledge improvement: "Unfortunately, the direct relationship between the objectives and the goals is not usually well-supported by empirical evidence." (Larson, 12: p.110) Student goals tend to be of such a diverse nature that more than improvement of basic skills and knowledge are involved. (Shearon, 12)

Some researchers have attempted to discern the broader, more subjective benefits associated with participation in ABE programs. Generally this type of research has been done by asking students to

report the impact they perceived participation to have made in their lives.

> "Those individuals who utilize educational resources are in unique positions to provide information concerning the value and impact of the resources. Too often program participants are overlooked in favor of more sophisticated evaluation procedures. However, from the perspective of personal satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction, it is the participant, alone, who is qualified to speak to this issue." (Hole, 9: p.4)

Several studies have combined the qualitative and life style impacts of adult education program attendance using current and former students as the data sources. The Maryland researchers, for example, interviewed 120 current ABE/GED students who reported factors such as community involvement, increased self-confidence, and various other affective changes to be the most important benefits of the program. (Walker, 18)

A West Virginia study also used interviews to gather data from current students, former students, and potential students. Former students, compared to the other two groups, were more likely to be earning more money, to be working full time and to give GED completion as the main reason for attending the program. (Shipp, 13)

Forty-six students who had completed an external high school diploma program in Wisconsin were interviewed in a 1979 follow-up study. The main reason given for entering the program by 34% of those interviewed was personal satisfaction; ninety-five per cent of the students also listed personal satisfaction as a major benefit of the program. Other benefits reported by students were, proportionately: positive self-image, 36%, self-confidence, 32%; attitude change, 13%

and family respect, 19%. Although major gains in knowledge and skills were reported, the students perceived the primary benefits, as noted, to be more affective and subjective in nature. Half of those interviewed had enrolled in an education program since receiving their high school equivalency diploma, and 69% declared intentions to pursue an educational program. Nearly 85% of the former students said they had changed jobs since receiving the diploma. (Hole, 9) The national evaluation study conducted by the U.S. Department of Education found the single greatest student gain to be an improved self-concept, with over 84% of students reporting having benefited in that area. (U.S. Dept. of Education, 17)

The 1976 follow-up study by the Gateway Technical Institute obtained more mixed results. A total of 270 interviews were conducted with former ABE students. Fifty-six per cent of the former students said the main reason they entered the program was related to seeking further education, even though only about a third had enrolled in a subsequent education program at the time of the interview. Although 82% of those interviewed reported satisfaction with what they had accomplished in ABE, family relationships, increased voter registration and other similar factors appeared not to have been effected a great deal by their attendance. (Fallon, 4)

In 1971, an 18 month longitudinal study was begun using approximately 400 ABE students drawn from a national sample of 2,318 programs. Students gave educational reasons for attending the programs, rather than citing vocational motivation. However, 75% said that attending the program had helped them in their job and 66% said that attendance had increased their income; fifteen per cent of the students

gave much of the credit for these benefits to the ABE program, while 20% credited the program at least partially. Although earnings and employment status improved during the study, 26% of students were receiving some form of public assistance at the onset of the study; the number had only fallen to a 22% level 18 months later. (Griffith, 7)

In 1972 a four year follow-up study was conducted with 111 graduates of the Jackson County Adult Evening High School Program in Iowa. The data reported were collected through 104 completed questionnaires. Of those graduates reporting increased income, a change in job or a promotion, 80% said the change was related to graduating from the ABE program. Other occupationally related findings included: more housewives entering the labor force, multiple job promotions for some individuals and an improved financial status. Most reported improvements in their social and personal lives. Additionally, 100% of the respondents believed the ABE program to be a wise use of tax money and nearly all of the graduates had remained in their local communities.

One of the most extensive studies of former ABE students was done in Ohio. The 1977 study used telephone interviews to gather data from students leaving the ABE program in 1973-74. A control group consisting of non-high school graduates age 16 and over also was used. The basic findings of the study, which attempted to measure the impact the ABE program had made to the lives of the students, were quite positive. When compared to the control group, the former students showed significant gains in nearly all aspects of personal, vocational, social and educational areas studied. Included were such areas as: use of the library, self-confidence, voter registration, job promotions, plans to further their education and attendance of parent/

teacher meetings at their child's school, among others. The study did produce some unexpected results. For example, an inverse relationship was found to exist between high reading and math scores achieved by ABE students and the number of hours those students spent in the ABE program.

A few studies have attempted to determine the cost/benefit aspect of ABE programs. Most researchers in this area are quick to point out the many inherent difficulties in attempting to conduct such an analysis. Nearly all cost/benefit calculations are so broad that only general effects, rather than precise calculations, can be isolated.

Attempting to determine the cost effectiveness or a cost/benefit ratio for ABE programs is very difficult due to problems in obtaining accurate data and in deciding what exactly constitutes costs and benefits. An additional problem, as noted by Drake, is that cost/ benefit analysis has a tendency to ignore student achievement and qualitative measures; "The concept of efficiency or cost effectiveness is a good servant and a bad master." (Drake, 3: p. 123)

The difficulties associated with this type of study may help to account for the scarcity of research in the area. One study simply extrapolated the increased earnings an ABE student likely would receive in a lifetime by using census figures correlating income level with the level of formal education. (Webb, 20)

A recent study by Batten used a Delphi technique to gather the perceptions of ABE administrators in Alabama regarding the cost/benefit aspects of the program. The perceptions were that ABE was very cost effective. Batten concluded that:

> "Economic benefits and tax dollar savings to society become evident. Law breaking, unemployment and state and federal free services are costly. This costly bill is presented annually to the taxpayer. A reduction in the tax bill of costly social services should be a direct result of educating the illiterate adult." (Batten, 1: p.49)

Once again, however, the cost effectiveness of the program is determined or suggested in an indirect fashion.

Those individuals who have investigated the cost/benefit questions, while longing for better procedures upon which to base calculations, seem to agree that ABE programs are cost effective.

> "Essentially there are two choices: 1) to provide adequate educational opportunities for undereducated and illiterate adults to enable them to become self-sufficient and contributing members of society; or 2) to continue to direct excessive amounts of taxpayers' dollars for the support of maintenance systems for the illiterate and undereducated." (Turlington, 16: p. ii)

The financial benefits of adult education are not always immediate, but may become apparent over time; "Income among high school graduates are double the income of those with less than 8 years of school, more than 50 per cent higher than those of people with an elementary school education." (Groteluschen, 8: p. 113)

Another consideration is that financial benefits may accrue to society in indirect ways. Huge amounts of money are spent to operate our penal institutions, yet, for example; "In the federal prisons, 96 per cent of the newly committed have not finished high school. Up to 20 per cent are functionally illiterate, a large number turn out to be four to six grades below their claimed educational level." (Groteluschen, 8: p. 90) The costs of punishment, of course, are but one of the social costs of crime, and, as Webb points out; "... the fact that

a person does have an inadequate education with its limited occupational choices, low income and/or unemployment, and lower status seems to increase the likelihood of turning to illegal means to fulfill social and economic desires." (Webb, 19: p. 69)

The vast concensus of educators who have investigated the cost/benefit area is that financial benefits are forthcoming to individuals as a result of ABE participation and, consequently, are forthcoming to society as well. Webb goes on to state:

> "Just as the individual can anticipate a number of both direct and indirect benefits from participation in adult education, so society has a right to anticipate a number of direct economic benefits as well as a number of indirect benefits from its support of individual participation. The indirect benefits may accrue to the immediate family, to the employer, or to society in general." (Webb, 19: p. 55)

After a careful review of cost/benefit analysis in adult literacy programs, Holtmann concluded that such an analysis should be possible, but warns that it should not be used as a tool for an oversimplified process of decision making. Society has goals beyond those measured in terms of cost effectiveness, and a number of those goals are addressed directly and indirectly by ABE programs. (Holtmann, 10)

The benefits to society are great, but the benefits ABE offers to the individual are even greater. Groteluschen concludes:

> "These programs frequently represent the last chance for adults to obtain educational skills: to find a job, to be a wise consumer, to read a newspaper, to apply for governmental benefits legally due, to prepare nutritious meals, to help one's children in school, to receive a driver's license -- even to have one's existence recorded in the U.S. census." (Groteluschen, i: p. v)

Problem Statement

The question being addressed by this study was, "What impact, if any, does attendance in an adult basic education program have on the lives of the students who attend?" The nature of the impact, in turn, was examined on two dimensions: 1) the qualitative impact in terms of changes in the quality of students lives and, 2) the financial impact in terms of changes in the financial well being of students. An additional question addressed, in a limited fashion, was the cost effectiveness of the ABE programs studied.

Assumptions of the Study

It was assumed that the data provided by students would be valid, in spite of being self-reported, based on memory and, for the most part, incapable of being documented in any other way. It was further assumed that students could best judge the qualitative and subjective impact the ABE program had on their lives.

Limitations of the Study

All data collected in this study are based on the responses given by interviewed students. Consequently, the data are only as valid as the accuracy and completeness of the students' recollections, their willingness to share their perceptions and the candidness of their responses.

Programs were selected randomly, but the final selection of interviewed students was based on availability.

Definition of Terms

Several key terms are operationally defined for use in this study; those terms are defined below.

ABE Program - These are the programs sampled in the study and include both adult basic education and high school equivalency.

ABE Student - These include both adult basic education students and those seeking a high school equivalency certificate. English as a second language students were not included in the study.

Current Students - These are ABE students enrolled in an ABE program at the time the interview was conducted.

Former Students - These are ABE students who were formerly enrolled in an ABE program but who, for any reason, had left the program within the five years prior to the study and who were not currently enrolled in an ABE program.

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Chapter 2

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

The study had both a research component and an evaluative component, though the essential nature of the study was descriptive. The major objective was to describe the effects of the ABE program on the lives of students in both qualitative terms (e.g. improved self-concept) and in quantitative terms (e.g. financial gain).

Student responses served as the data source used to assess and evaluate these changes. These perceptions were gathered through structured interviews at the ABE program sites. Trained interviewers met individually with each student, conducted the interview, and recorded student responses on the interview instrument.

The statewide sample included students currently enrolled in an ABE program and students who had left the program, for any reason, within the past five years. Both current and former students were sampled for two primary reasons. The first was to provide a control measure (current students) to which the data collected on former students could be compared. Previous, similar studies had used a control group comprised of adults in the general population who were eligible for the ABE program, but had never participated in the program. The current study, by contrast, used students who currently were attending the ABE program. The main rationale for this choice was the assumption that the treatment factor (i.e. participation in the ABE program) would not account for most of the variance seen in the changes in the

quality of life between adults having left the ABE program and adults having never participated in the program. The attitudes and values of adults choosing to participate in the ABE program are assumed to be important to the outcomes assessed. Consequently, the fact that both current and former students had chosen to enroll in the program made them more comparable groups.

The second reason for using a separate sample group of current students was to provide data on which follow-up, longitudinal studies could be based. The most complete and accurate evaluation of the impact ABE program participation has on students' lives can be measured most appropriately through the use of longitudinal procedures.

Sample

The study sample was drawn from a total population of both current and former ABE students in Montana. Current students were those attending an ABE program during the 1982-83 academic year. Former students were defined as any adult who had terminated participation in the ABE program at any time within the five years prior to the study, and who was not attending an ABE program at the time of the study.

There were 19 ABE programs, enrolling approximately 1,865 students, operating in Montana at the time of the study. The design of the study called for a random sample of students drawn from a random sample of nine Montana ABE programs stratified by enrollment into three groups. The first category included programs with student enrollments of less than fifty students. The programs selected in this category were: Hardin, Libby and Thompson Falls. The second

category consisted of programs with between 50 and 199 students currently enrolled; programs in this category were: Havre, Glendive, and Browning. The final category included programs with 200 or more students. The Montana programs selected in this category were Billings and Missoula. The Browning program was undergoing a reorganization at the time of the study and was not in operation; consequently, the Browning program was dropped from the study. A random sample of students to be interviewed was drawn for both current students and for former students. Figure 1 shows enrollments for each of the programs sampled, total enrollments over the study period and the samples drawn.

Figure 1

Sites, Enrollments and Sample Sizes for ABE Programs used in the Study

Site	Estimated Student Enrollment 1976-1981	Student Enrollment 1982	Current Student Sample	Former Student Sample	Total Sample
Billings	3,480	696	74	149	223
Missoula	2,675	535	57	115	172
Kalispell	1,115	223	24	48	72
Glendive	650	130	14	28	42
Havre	400	80	9	18	27
Libby	210	42	5	9	14
Thompson Falls	200	40	4	9	13
Hardin	100	20	3	5	8
TOTAL	8,830	1,865	190	381	571

In drawing the sample of former students, an attempt was made to stratify the sample, by student numbers, over the prior five year period during which students had attended the program. The distribution criterion was the year the student left the program.

In anticipation of difficulty in locating students for the study, a letter was sent to a greater number of students than needed for the sample; all students sent a letter were randomly selected as per the process just described. The letter (Appendix A) explained the nature of the study and requested their participation by consenting to be interviewed. A return, stamped post card was included with the letter so students could indicate their willingness to participate.

As this process proceeded, it became evident that difficulty in locating students and, to a lesser extent, obtaining a willingness to participate in the study from those students located, would not permit the sampling procedure to be carried out as planned. At this point, an attempt was made to find enough students to fill the total sample size desired. After the list of randomly selected students was exhausted, the list of total current and former students (which met our criteria and from which our original sample had been drawn) was used. Students on these two lists were contacted in the order their names appeared. This procedure, in most cases, allowed attainment of the sample size originally prescribed. Ultimately, 516 students were interviewed: 328 of the 381 former students desired and 188 of the 190 current students desired. Although the random selection of programs was maintained, the random selection of students could not be maintained while still achieving anywhere near the sample size desired.

It was felt that any resulting bias would not follow any particular pattern and that maintaining the larger sample size, even though no longer randomly drawn, would contribute to the validity of the study.

Table 1 presents a summary of the demographic information collected during the interviews. Data are presented for current and former students and the total.

Table 1

Summary of Demographic Information
for the Sample Interviewed

	Current Students		Former Students		Total Students	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male	79	42%	111	34%	190	37%
Female	107	57%	216	66%	323	63%
No Response	2	1%	1	<1%	3	<1%
Age:						
16-17 years old	8	4%	3	<1%	11	2%
18-20	43	23%	59	18%	102	20%
21-30	75	40%	93	28%	168	33%
31-40	39	21%	87	27%	126	24%
41-50	13	7%	49	15%	62	12%
51-60	5	3%	32	10%	37	7%
61-70	4	2%	3	<1%	7	1%
Over 70	1	<1%	1	<1%	2	<1%
No Response	0	0%	1	<1%	1	<1%
Ethnic Background:						
White	166	88%	290	89%	456	88%
Indian	10	6%	11	3%	21	4%
Hispanic	2	1%	9	3%	11	2%
Asian	6	3%	6	2%	12	2%
Black	2	1%	1	<1%	3	<1%
Other	2	1%	9	3%	11	2%
No Response	0	0%	2	<1%	2	<1%

Summary of Demographic Information (Continued)

	Current Students		Former Students		Total Students	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Residence:						
In town (urban)	143	77%	245	75%	388	75%
In country (rural)	44	23%	78	24%	122	24%
No Response	1	<1%	5	1%	6	1%
Dependents:						
Mean No. dependent children	$\bar{X}$=2; N=81		$\bar{X}$=2.2; N=165		$\bar{X}$=2.1; N=246	
Mean No. of other dependents	$\bar{X}$=1.6; N=7		$\bar{X}$=1.8; N=29		$\bar{X}$=1.7; N=36	
Education: Highest grade completed at time of Enrollment in ABE Program						
Below 8th grade	15	8%	29	9%	44	9%
8th	21	11%	36	11%	57	11%
9th	30	16%	45	14%	75	15%
10th	34	18%	67	20%	101	20%
11th	32	17%	57	17%	89	17%
12th	35	19%	55	17%	90	17%
Higher	19	10%	20	6%	39	8%
Unknown	2	1%	2	<1%	4	<1%
No Response	0	0%	17	5%	17	3%
Mean	$\bar{X}$=10th		$\bar{X}$=10th		$\bar{X}$=10th	
Received Since Enrolling in ABE Program						
GED Certificate	12	6%	135	41%	175	28%
High School Diploma	5	3%	34	10%	39	8%
Both	1	<1%	7	2%	8	2%
Neither	169	90%	143	44%	312	60%
No Response	1	<1%	9	3%	10	2%

A profile of an average interviewed student suggests that student to be a white, 40 year old woman with two children and who has completed ten years of school, but has not graduated from high school or received a high school equivalency certificate. Many differences, of course, can be found among individual students.

Instrument Development

An advisory committee was formed to assist with the development of the survey instrument. The advisory committee was comprised of program administrators from each of the eight sample programs, an administrator from the field test program site, and administrators from two additional programs. The eleven member advisory committee met with the research team at an early point in the study.

The meeting established a committment, on the part of program administrators, to support and cooperate in the research, attend to study logistics, and provide input into the interview process and instrumentation. The meeting also established that two instruments, one for current students and one for former students should be developed and should solicit essentially the same information.

A second step in the development of the set of questions (hereafter referred to as the interview instruments) was to further refine the drafts. The revised drafts were used in the interviewer training workshops. A total of 23 interviewers completed this training; most of the interviewers were graduate students in the Montana State University College of Education, although a few were current and former ABE teachers. The training workshops, although focusing primarily on interview techniques, lead to further refinement of the instrument.

Next, the fourth set of drafts of the instruments were reviewed by a county social services professional who offered critical comments which were incorporated into the next drafts.

The final step in developing the instrument was to conduct a field test with 15 ABE students, in a Montana program, who were not part of the sample. The field test was designed to give the interviewers an opportunity to learn the approximate time needed for an average interview, to practice with actual ABE students, to identify problems with the interview technique and to identify any problems with the instruments. In fact, very few problems emerged. All interviewers were required to complete the field test experience before being asked to interview the sampled students. Copies of both instruments may be found in Appendix B.

Data Collection

The actual collection of the data was done at the program sites by trained interviewers and all data were recorded in writing on the interview instrument by the interviewer. Generally, the interviewers traveled to the program sites in teams of two or more. In some instances, several trips were necessary to a particular program site in order to complete all required interviews.

Interviews with all former and most current students were done on a prearranged appointment basis. Each student representing a potential interview was contacted, usually by telephone, through the cooperation and assistance of local ABE program faculty and staff. If a contacted student still consented to participate in the study, an interview appointment was set for the day(s) the interviewer would be on

site. Each interview required approximately 30 minutes. In some instances current students were interviewed while they were on site attending the ABE program. Students were not paid, or compensated in any other material way for their participation in the study.

A total of 516 interviews were conducted; 188 current students and 328 former students. All interviews were voluntary and conducted in person by a trained interviewer. When an open ended response was solicited, the response was recorded in the student's own words to the extent possible. All data were entered into computer storage upon returning to the University. Data analysis was performed via computer.

Chapter 3

DATA SUMMARY AND PRESENTATION

This chapter will portray the data collected in a series of tables accompanied by narrative comments. The data have been assembled into groupings which comprise the four sections of the chapter. The first section briefly describes the reasons students gave for attending the ABE program and to what extent their goals were achieved. The second and third sections focus on the ABE programs' impact on students' lives in qualitative and financial dimensions respectively. The final section concerns the students' evaluations of the ABE programs they attended.

I. Student Goals and Achievement

Students were asked to identify the main reason or goal which caused them to begin attending the ABE program.

Table 2

Main Reason Given for Attending the ABE Program

Reason Given	Current Students		Former Students	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Earn a "GED Certificate"	75	40%	167	51%
Learn Basic Skills	41	22%	78	24%
Earn an External High School Diploma	23	12%	46	14%
Personal Growth	0	0%	19	6%
Other	49	26%	17	5%
No Response	0	0%	1	<1%

As can be seen in Table 2, students reported motivating factors which were, apparently, academic in nature. The importance of the certificates, diplomas and skills may be viewed more clearly, however, in Table 3.

Table 3

Student Reported Importance of the Main Reason Given for Attending the ABE Program (see Table 2)

	Current Students		Former Students	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Job Preparation	74	39%	118	36%
Further Education	52	28%	85	26%
Personal Growth	17	9%	100	30%
Obtain High School Equivalency Certificate	6	3%	6	2%
Other	38	20%	18	5%
No Response	1	<1%	1	<1%

When students were asked to describe why their stated goals were important to them, the academic theme, expressed as "further education," remained strong, but was exceeded by a perceived advantage to be gained in preparing for and seeking employment.

A large majority of former students reported having achieved their stated goals. A reasonable speculation may be that, for those who did not, the lapse between the time they last attended the ABE program and the time of the interview could be a factor. Since this time period ranges from five years to less than one year, some of the more recent graduates may achieve their goals in the foreseeable future.

Table 4

Student Reported Achievement of Personal Goals During ABE Program Attendance

	Current Students		Former Students	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Goals Achieved	36	19%	235	72%
Goals Not Achieved	148	79%	90	27%
No Response	4	1%	3	1%

As shown in Table 4, goal achievement among current students was considerably lower than among former students. There is no apparent reason to expect the achievement of current students, upon completion of their programs, not to approximate the achievement levels reported by former students.

II. Qualitative Impact on Students' Lives

This section will portray data collected in three areas: 1) the effect of the ABE program on acquired knowledge and skills, and on community participation; 2) the effect of the ABE program on educational aspects of the lives of students and their children, and, 3) the effect of the ABE program on the personal lives of students.

Knowledge, Skills and Community Participation

Considerable improvement was reported in all basic areas by both current students and former students. However, as shown in Table 5, over 20% of students reported little or no skill improvement. This outcome, while not a terribly high percentage, is not limited to current students.

Table 5

Student Perceived Improvement in Basic Skill Areas
Resulting from ABE Program Attendance

Skill Area	Extent of Improvement											
	A Lot				Somewhat				Little or None				No Response			
	Current Students		Former Students		Current Students		Former Students		Current Students		Former Students		Current Students		Former Students	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Math	97	52%	154	47%	52	28%	96	29%	37	20%	75	23%	2	1%	3	1%
Reading	81	43%	121	37%	56	30%	116	35%	48	26%	89	27%	3	1%	2	<1%
Writing	80	43%	124	41%	69	37%	97	30%	39	21%	95	29%	0	0%	2	<1%
Communication	53	28%	116	35%	34	18%	93	28%	100	53%	115	35%	1	<1%	4	1%

Table 6 shows a less dramatic improvement for areas of applied knowledge than were shown in basic skill areas. Nevertheless, gains in these areas of "functional literacy" are substantial. The large percentage of students not responding to the last item, "Health care for yourself and your family," may indicate this was a curriculum area not stressed in most ABE programs.

Table 6

Student Perceived Improvement in Basic Knowledge Areas Resulting from ABE Program Attendance

Knowledge Area	Extent of Improvement													
	A Lot				Somewhat				Little or None				No Response			
	Current Students		Former Students		Current Students		Former Students		Current Students		Former Students		Current Students		Former Students	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
How to Find and Keep a Job	39	21%	52	16%	44	23%	91	28%	104	55%	183	56%	1	<1%	2	<1%
How to get the Most Value for Your Money	40	21%	81	25%	63	34%	107	33%	83	44%	138	42%	2	1%	2	<1%
Your Rights and Responsibilities as a Citizen	47	25%	87	27%	55	29%	101	31%	84	45%	135	41%	2	1%	5	1%
Your Knowledge about Community Resources	25	13%	79	24%	45	24%	86	25%	108	57%	154	47%	10	5%	9	2%
Health Care for Yourself and Your Family	14	7%	29	9%	8	4%	32	10%	22	12%	105	32%	144	76%	162	49%

Involvement and participation in community activities, organizations and services may result from ABE program participation, even when not a specific part of the curriculum. Table 7 indicates that students' perceived such involvement and participation became more likely for them as a function of attending the ABE program. Use of the library and increased reading activity are likely to have personal as well as community implications. For example, reading the newspaper may benefit students in various ways as individuals, but may also inform them about community issues and activities.

Table 7

Student Perceived Increased Likelihood to Participate in, or Become Involved with Various Activities or Services of the Community Resulting from ABE Program Attendance

Area of Involvement or Participation	Extent of Involvement or Participation											
	A Lot				Somewhat				Little or None				No Response			
	Current Students		Former Students		Current Students		Former Students		Current Students		Former Students		Current Students		Former Students	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Use of Library	63	34%	86	26%	52	26%	89	27%	73	39%	150	46%	0	0%	3	<1%
Read Magazines Books or Newspapers	86	46%	120	37%	42	22%	85	26%	59	31%	120	37%	1	1%	3	<1%
Participate in Community Organizations	27	14%	53	26%	53	28%	77	23%	107	57%	195	59%	1	1%	3	<1%
Vote in Elections	32	17%	65	20%	24	13%	47	14%	125	66%	209	64%	7	3%	7	2%

Table 8 suggests both groups of students are more likely to become actively involved with the formal education of their children as a result of attending the ABE program.

Table 8

Student Perceived Increased Likelihood to Become Involved in School Activities Regarding their Children's Education Resulting from ABE Program Attendance*

Type of Involvement	Extent of Involvement By Students with School Age Children													
	A Lot				Somewhat				Little or None				No Response			
	Current Students		Former Students		Current Students		Former Students		Current Students		Former Students		Current Students		Former Students	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Attend Meetings for Parents at School	15	25%	36	24%	9	15%	23	15%	29	47%	84	56%	8	13%	8	5%
Talk with Teachers or Principals about their children	19	31%	47	31%	10	17%	26	17%	24	39%	72	48%	8	13%	6	4%

* 61 Current students had school age children (32%)
151 Former students had school age children (46%)

The findings may result from changing educational attitudes or values, or may result from an increased self-confidence on the parts of the parent, but for whatever reason, the result appears to be a positive one.

Table 9 summarizes the responses when students were asked to consider the changes in their knowledge, skills and community involvement, and in their educational attitudes which could be attributed to having attended the ABE program.

Table 9

Student Perceived Direction and Magnitude of Overall Change In Basic Skills, Knowledge and Community Involvement Resulting from ABE Program Attendance

	Student Perceptions of Change							
	For the Better		For the Worse		Little or No Change		No Response	
Direction of Change	Current Students	Former Students	Current Students	Former Students	Current Students	Former Students	Current Students	Former Students
	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %
	172 91%	284 87%	2 1%	1 <1%	12 6%	42 13%	2 1%	1 <1%

	Large Change		Small Change		Between a Large and a Small Change		No Response	
Magnitude of Change*	Current Students	Former Students	Current Students	Former Students	Current Students	Former Students	Current Students	Former Students
	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %
	86 46%	146 45%	22 12%	29 9%	65 35%	108 33%	15 7%	1 <1%

* For respondents indicating a change for the better or worse

The overwhelming response was that a change for the better had taken place; that is, the students perceived their quality of life as having improved due to their ABE participation. Over 80% of both the current and former students interviewed said that the extent of improvement had been moderate to large. There seems to be little doubt in the minds of the students that participation in the ABE program has, overall, had a major, positive impact on the improvement of basic communication skills, the improvement of selected applied knowledge areas, and the increased likelihood of participation in the community and in their childrens' education. Their own attitudes toward and participation in education was reported to have improved as well.

Table 10

Student Perceived Factors Associated with ABE Program Attendance which were at Least Partially Responsible for Overall Changes in Basic Skills and Knowledge

Factors Stated By Students	Current Students		Former Students	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Basic Skills Improvement	28	15%	28	9%
Self-Awareness/ Personal Growth	25	13%	46	14%
Relationship with Teachers and Staff	29	15%	41	13%
Other	51	27%	74	23%
No Response	55	29%	139	42%

While many students did not attribute these changes to a specific aspect of the ABE program, those factors which were cited were distributed in such a way as to suggest a balanced program. No factor mentioned by students, as portrayed in Table 10, appears to be dominant.

Impact on Educational Attitudes and Activities

Students were asked if they had enrolled in any other educational program since enrolling in the ABE program or, if a former student, since leaving the ABE program. Table 11 shows the majority of students had not enrolled in an additional program by the time of the interview.

Table 11

Enrollment in Other Educational Programs Subsequent to Beginning Attendance in the ABE Program (Current students) or to Terminating Attendance in the ABE Program (Former students)

	Current Students		Former Students	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Have Enrolled	31	16%	119	36%
Have Not Enrolled	150	80%	170	52%
No Response	7	4%	38	12%

Students who had enrolled in a formal education program since enrolling in the ABE program, or since leaving the ABE program in the case of former students, were asked to indicate the type of program. Table 12 portrays these responses as well as the status of their participation in those programs. Among the 119 former students who had pursued further education in the vocational/technical area, for example, 34 were still enrolled in the program, 34 had completed the program, 8 students had dropped out of the program and 43 students did not respond.

Table 12

Status of Current and Former ABE Students Having Enrolled in Other Educational Programs Subsequent to Beginning Attendance in the ABE Program (Current Students) or Terminating Attendance in the ABE Program (Former Students)

Type of Educational Program	Currently Enrolled in Other Programs		Completed Other Programs		Dropped Out Of Other Programs		No Response	
	Current Students	Former Students	Current Students	Former Students	Current Students	Former Students	Current Students	Former Students
	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %
Vocational/ Technical	8 26%	34 29%	2 6%	34 29%	2 6%	8 7%	19 61%	43 36%
Two year College	5 16%	5 4%	1 3%	2 2%	1 3%	3 3%	24 78%	109 91%
Four year College	1 3%	13 11%	1 3%	8 7%	0 0%	7 6%	29 94%	91 76%
General Credit	4 13%	7 6%	0 0%	9 8%	0 0%	1 <1%	27 87%	102 86%
General Non-Credit	4 13%	5 4%	0 0%	11 9%	0 0%	1 <1%	27 87%	102 86%
ABE	2 6%	1 <1%	1 3%	2 2%	0 0%	1 <1%	28 91%	115 97%
GED Preparation	0 0%	2 2%	0 0%	0 0%	1 3%	1 <1%	30 97%	116 97%
High School Completion	2 6%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	29 94%	119 100%

A fairly large number of those students who had enrolled, did so in a vocational/technical program. The number of current students enrolled in education programs, in addition to the ABE program, seems rather high given the time demands of attending the ABE program.

Relatively few students had dropped out of programs once begun; this perhaps suggests high motivation and favorable attitudes toward education. Although former students reported a much higher total enrollment (Table 11), and a higher completion rate in vocational/technical programs (Table 12), such a finding is not surprising in consideration of the differential time spans between current and former students during which such programs could be completed.

The findings reported in Table 13 indicate most students were unable to determine if ABE participation affected their desire to enroll in additional education programs. Of the relative few who felt the ABE program was a positive influence, the vast majority were unable to recall a single aspect of the program which was most influential.

Table 13

Student Perceived Influence Attending the ABE Program Had on Their Desire to Enroll in Other Educational Programs

	Current Students		Former Students	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Did ABE Attendance Influence Desire to Enroll in Other Programs				
Yes	27	14%	57	17%
No	28	15%	97	30%
No Response	133	71%	174	53%
	(N=188)		(N=328)	
If yes, ways in which the ABE Program was Influential				
No specific way	22	81%	36	64%
Helps in Entering a Vocational Program	0	0%	5	9%
Fostered Enjoyment of Learning	0	0%	1	2%
Other	3	11%	5	9%
No Response	2	9%	9	16%
	(N=27)		(N=57)	

Students not enrolling in additional education programs were asked why they chose not to do so. The reasons given as shown in Table 14, do not suggest any particular causal factors. Only a few current students isolated a lack of time due to outside responsibilities as a factor. Since current students were also participating in the ABE program at the time of the interview, they, perhaps, were even more pressed for time than were former students.

Table 14

Student Reported Reasons for not Having Enrolled in Any Additional Educational Programs

	Current Students		Former Students	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
No Specific Reason	85	57%	51	30%
No time; outside Responsibilities	33	22%	0	0%
Other	32	21%	63	37%
No Response	0	0%	56	33%
	(N=150)		(N=170)	

The data reported on Table 15 lend credence to the notion that the ABE program does have a positive influence on students' attitudes toward education. Adult education literature abounds with reports of the negative experiences and subsequent associations and attitudes toward education and school held by ABE students. Yet the overwhelming majority of students reported an intention to enroll in more educational programs. As reported earlier, students were unable to attribute such a desire for increased education to a specific aspect of their participation in the ABE program. These data appear to strongly suggest that the overall ABE experience did have a positive impact on students' attitudes toward education.

Table 15

Student Reported Intentions to Enroll in
Additional Educational Programs

	Current Students		Former Students	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Plan To Enroll in Additional Educational Programs or Classes				
Yes	158	84%	282	86%
No	21	11%	38	12%
No Response	9	5%	8	2%
	(N=188)		(N=328)	
If yes, type of Program or Course:				
Computer Related	13	8%	28	10%
Clerical Related	13	8%	23	8%
English	8	5%	0	0%
Vocational (not specified)	16	10%	9	3%
College (not specified)	9	6%	12	4%
GED preparation	0	0%	15	5%
Other	99	63%	165	59%
No Response	0	0%	30	11%
	(N=158)		(N=292)	

Impact on Personal Lives

An underlying tone in much extant writing on adult basic education and, surely, an implicit if not explicit belief of many adult educators is that many benefits accruing to participating students are not directly related to the program goals and objectives. Many such benefits pertain to improved self-concept and improved interpersonal relationships.

Since a major goal of this study was to evaluate the impact participation in ABE programs had on the quality of the lives of the participants, an attempt was made to measure these benefits.

Table 16 portrays student responses reflecting perceptions of change in direction and magnitude on items pertaining to self-concept and interpersonal relationships. Clearly, both current and former students feel they have significantly improved along these dimensions. Reports of their lives having changed for the worse in these aspects were nil. The fact that both groups of students reported such changes suggests the changes may be long lasting.

Table 16

Direction and Magnitude of Student Perceived Changes in Their Personal Lives Between When They First Began Attending the ABE Program and the Time of the Interview

Aspects of Personal Life	Perceived Direction and Magnitude of Change																			
	Much Better				Somewhat Better				Much Worse				Somwhat Worse				Little or No Change				Not Applicable			
	Current Students		Former Students		Current Students		Former Students		Current Students		Former Students		Current Students		Former Students		Current Students		Former Students		Current Students		Former Students	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sense of Satisfaction with your Life in General	106	57%	206	63%	69	37%	85	26%	1	<1%	0	0%	1	<1%	33	10%	10	5%	3	1%	0	0%	1	<1%
How Well You Get Along with Other People	65	35%	110	34%	52	28%	114	35%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	101	31%	63	34%	2	<1%	6	3%	1	<1%
How Well You Get Along on Your Job	34	18%	97	30%	23	12%	66	20%	0	0%	4	1%	0	0%	49	15%	31	17%	111	34%	98	53%	1	<1%
How Good You Feel About Yourself	132	70%	230	71%	47	24%	70	21%	0	0%	1	<1%	0	0%	20	6%	10	5%	3	1%	0	0%	2	<1%
Your General Level of Self-Confidence	111	59%	221	67%	60	32%	74	23%	0	0%	1	<1%	1	<1%	29	9%	16	9%	1	<1%	0	0%	1	<1%
Satisfaction with Your Home and Family Life	84	45%	170	52%	64	34%	81	25%	0	0%	2	<1%	0	0%	61	19%	37	20%	6	2%	2	1%	7	2%

An interesting note is that something of a pattern appears to have emerged among items reflecting interpersonal relationships, e.g. "How well you get along with other people;" "How well you get along on your job;" and "Satisfaction with your home and family life," did not receive responses as favorable as did items reflecting the self and self-concept, e.g. "Sense of satisfaction with your life in general;" "How good you feel about yourself;" and "Your general level of self-confidence." Perhaps the difference can be accounted for in terms of the needs the students brought to the program. That is, their self-concept and self-confidence were in greater need of assistance than their interpersonal relations. One might argue that ABE programs are more attuned to the former need as well.

The idea that effects of the ABE program might reach beyond benefits to the individual student resulted in probing a bit more into possible effects the students' participation may have had on their children.

Table 17

Student Perceived Changes in Their School Age Children Resulting From the Students' Attendance in the ABE Program*

Perceived changes in children	Current Students		Former Students	
	No.	%	No.	%
Children's Relationship with Parent (respondent)				
1) Improved	26	43%	82	54%
2) Other	8	13%	0	0%
3) No Response	27	44%	69	46%
Children's Educational Development				
1) More Interested in School	26	43%	78	52%
2) Other	9	14%	0	0%
3) No Response	26	43%	73	48%
Children's Social Development				
1) Improved Relationship with Others	8	13%	13	9%
2) Improved Self-Confidence	2	3%	9	6%
3) Other	10	16%	15	10%
4) No Response	41	67%	114	75%
Other Changes				
1) General Improvement in Parent/Child Relationship	13	21%	39	26%
2) Other	28	46%	0	9%
3) No Response	20	33%	112	74%

* 61 Current Students had School Age Children
151 Former Students had School Age Children

Table 17 shows the responses given by the 61 current students and the 151 former students with school age children. Clearly, students perceived their children to have benefited in terms of becoming more interested in school and in the development of better relationships with their parents. Their childrens' social development does not appear to have been affected substantially.

Table 18

Student Perceived Direction and Magnitude of Overall Change in their Personal Lives Resulting from ABE Attendance

	Student Perceptions of Change							
Direction of Change	For the Better		For the Worse		Little or No Change		No Response	
	Current Students	Former Students	Current Students	Former Students	Current Students	Former Students	Current Students	Former Students
	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %
	40 21%	239 73%	6 3%	2 1%	14 8%	40 12%	128 68%	47 14%
Magnitude of Change	Large Change		Small Change		Between a Large and a Small Change		No Response	
	Current Students	Former Students	Current Students	Former Students	Current Students	Former Students	Current Students	Former Students
	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %	No. %
	180 96%	293 89%	0 0%	2 <1%	7 4%	30 9%	1 <1%	2 1%

When asked to summarize the direction and magnitude of change in their personal lives as a result of attending the ABE program, students responded as indicated in Table 18. Very few students believed they were worse off in this regard, and only a few more reported little or no change. Considerably more former students reported a change for the better in their personal lives, however, than did current students. The majority of current students chose not to respond to the question, a phenomenon for which no readily apparent explanation exists. Even more perplexing, nearly all of the current students responded to the subsequent question by indicating that the change which took place in their personal lives was a large one. Former students also indicated a large change took place and, like the current students, responded in greater numbers than to the previous question. A strong change for the better seems to have occurred in the personal lives of the former students as a result of attending the ABE program. Current students certainly seem to have perceived a strong change took place, but were unwilling or unable to state the nature of the change.

Table 19

Student Perceived Factors Associated with ABE Program Attendance which were at Least Partially Responsible for Overall Changes in Students' Personal Lives

Factors Stated by Students	Current Students		Former Students	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Self Confidence/ Personal Growth	38	20%	161	49%
Individualized Attention Leading to a more Positive Self-Concept	73	39%	106	32%
Learning Basic Skills	20	11%	31	9%
Other	--	--	2	1%
No Response	8	4%	28	9%

Table 19 indicates factors associated with the ABE program were cited by students as being at least partially responsible for the overall changes in their personal lives. The factors cited e.g. "Self-confidence/personal growth" and "Individualized attention leading to a more positive self-concept" were rated more highly than was "Learning basic skills," the only other specific factor cited. This outcome is consistent with the earlier mention of changes in personal lives usually not being related to a specific curriculum area or program goal. While learning basic skills may lead to, for example, increased self-confidence, students seem to separate the two. There seems to be something about the ABE experience as a whole which leads to the perception of personal growth on the part of the students. The total social/psychological/educational experience, rather than a single aspect of the program, appears to result in this perception.

III. Financial Impact on Students' Lives

Financial considerations are important, not only to students, but also to local ABE programs and to federal, state and local funding agencies and institutions. This chapter will present data collected regarding changes in the financial status of the ABE students, the ABE program costs and possible relationships between the two.

Student Income

Roughly a quarter of the students interviewed were receiving government assistance in some form (e.g. food stamps, aid to families with dependent children) at the time they enrolled in the ABE program. As can be seen from the data reported in Table 20, no significant

change in either the number of students on government assistance or in the dollar amount received per month had occurred by the time of the interview.

Table 20

Students Reporting Having Received Government Financial Assistance

	Current Students		Former Students	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
At Time of Enrollment in ABE Program	53	28%	82	25%
Average Dollar Amount Received	$384.00 per month		$415.00 per month	
At Time of Interview	53	100%*	83	101%*
Average Dollar Amount Received	$392.00 per month		$407.00 per month	

* Percent of the students initially receiving assistance

The data indicate that the same students receiving assistance at the time of the interview, primarily, were the same ones receiving assistance at the time of enrollment. Little difference is noted between current and former students. Although students were asked to identify ways in which the ABE program had helped them to reduce their dependence on government assistance (Table 21), the data just presented in Table 20, which indicate little or no reduction actually took place, renders the data in Table 21 of little value.

Table 21

Student Perceived Ways In Which Attending the ABE Program has Helped Reduce Dependence on Government Financial Assistance

	Current Students		Former Students	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Helped to Gain Employment	--	--	13	16%*
Other	8	15%*	6	7%*

* Percent of Students Initially Receiving Assistance

Changes were noted, however, in terms of student income from employment and in terms of total family income.

Table 22

Student Employment Status, Employment Income and Total Family Income (Excluding Government Assistance)

	Current Students		Former Students	
	No.	%	No.	%
Employed at Time of Enrollment in ABE Program	51	27%	124	38%
No Response	4	2%	2	<1%
Annual Net Income from that Employment				
Mean	$6,674		$6,688	
Median	$5,000		$5,200	
No Response	141	75%	223	68%
Employment at Time of Interview	61	32%	162	49%
No Response	2	1%	2	<1%
Annual Net Income from that Employment				
Mean	$6,422		$7,483	
Median	$4,800		$6,800	
No Response	138	73%	194	59%
Annual Total Family Income at Time of Enrollment in ABE Program				
Mean	$12,648		$14,370	
Median	$ 9,500		$13,200	
No Response	79	42%	164	50%
Annual Total Family Income at Time of Interview				
Mean	$12,800		$14,414	
Median	$ 8,600		$12,900	
No Response	82	44%	150	46%

When reviewing Table 22, note should be taken of the large percentage of students not responding to the interviewers' questions regarding income. Reluctance to disclose this kind of information is understandable, even in light of assurances of confidentiality offered by the interviewers. Interviewers were instructed not to press for responses in such cases.

Of the students responding, reported salaries for those employed were rather low. Although mean and median salaries are shown, the nature of the frequency distribution for these data suggest that the median figure probably is more representative of the sample in most cases. Total family income was roughly double that of the individual student, suggesting more than one wage earner in the family.

Unlike questions on income, nearly all students responded to questions regarding status of employment. As the data in Table 22 indicate, a larger percentage of students were employed at the time of the interview than were employed at the time they enrolled in the ABE program. Although this change clearly was a positive one, the meaning of the data regarding changes in income, as reported in Table 23, is less clear.

Table 23

Net Change in Student Reported Income
From Time of Enrollment in the ABE
Program to Time of Interview
(Excluding Government Assistance)

	Current Students (N=50)		Former Students (N=134)	
	Net Dollar Change	Net % Change	Net Dollar Change*	Net % Change*
Annual Income from Student Employment				
Mean	(-)$252.00	(-) 4%	(+)$ 795.00	(+) 12%
Median	(-)$200.00	(-) 4%	(+)$1,600.00	(+) 31%
Annual Total Family Income				
Mean	(+)$152.00	(+) 1%	(+)$ 44.00	(+) <1%
Median	(-)$900.00	(-) 10%	(-)$300.00	(-) 2%

* Over a period of from 1 to 5 years.

Looking at median income, a net loss was calculated for current students between the time of enrollment and the time of the interview for both individual student income gained through employment, and, to even a greater extent, for total family income. Current students, by definition, were attending the ABE program during this period of time and, consequently, were less available for employment. This circumstance may explain part of the loss in income for the individual student, but does little to explain the much higher loss of total family income. An interesting note, however, is that the mean total family income for current students actually rose.

Former students fared much better, with median income from employment increasing by 31% for individual students. Former students had been out of the ABE program from less than one year to five years and did not have time available for employment compromised by time needed to attend the ABE program. These factors may help to account for the significant increase in employment income. An additional factor, of course, is that the ABE program may have played an important role in helping students become more employable or more likely to realize vocational advancement. What appears not to be readily explainable is the overall decrease in total family income.

When asked about their perception of a change occuring in their families' overall financial condition and, if so, the nature of the change, the differences between current students and former students surfaced again.

The majority of both groups saw little or no change in their financial condition, but 23% more of the former students perceived a change than did current students. Of students in both groups who did

perceive a change, former students, as compared to current students, reported the change to be for the better by even a greater margin.

Table 24

Student Reported Changes in Overall Condition of Family Finances Since Enrolling in the ABE Program

	Current Students		Former Students	
	No.	%	No.	%
Financial condition has changed	33	18%	133	41%
Financial condition has changed little or none	149	79%	190	58%
No Response	6	3%	5	1%
Nature of Financial Changes:				
Improved Financial Condition	22	12%	187	57%
Worse Financial Condition	1	<1%	0	0%
Little Change in Financial Condition	5	3%	1	<1%
Other	30	16%	1	<1%
No Response	130	69%	139	42%

Program Costs

Each ABE program is required to file a final financial report for each year of instruction. One figure contained in that report and shown in Table 25, is the program's actual cost per student hour of instruction.

Table 25

Actual Program Cost Per
Student Hour of Instruction

Program	Average Annual Cost Per Academic Year*					Average Cost:**
	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1978-82
Billings	$ .60	$3.17	$ .75	$3.80	$ .85	$1.83
Missoula	.85	.87	.87	.88	1.34	.96
Kalispell	.97	.83	.49	1.76	1.15	1.04
Glendive	.20	.14	.08	.11	.09	.12
Havre	.36	.16	.14	.35	.37	.28
Libby	1.27	1.27	1.10	.78	1.02	1.09
Thompson Falls	.41	.43	.34	.36	.89	.49
Hardin	.20	.42	.68	.26	.35	.38
Average	.61	.91	.56	1.04	.76	.78

* Data supplied by local ABE programs
** Unweighted

Using the costs for all programs sampled, an average cost of $.78 per student hour of instruction was calculated over the five year perod. This average cost figure is used for all cost/benefit calculations for former students. The 1982 average figure for all programs sampled was $.76 per student hour of instruction and is used for all cost/benefit calculations for current students.

Table 26 shows the mean and median number of hours of instruction for the students interviewed in the study.

Table 26

Hours of ABE Program Instruction for
Current and Former Students Interviewed

	Current Students	Former Students	Total Students
Hours of instruction in ABE Program from time of Enrollment to Time of Interview			
Mean number of hours	214	338	305
Median number of hours	96	180	273
Total number of hours	40,200	117,226	157,426
Number of students Interviewed	188	328	516

Cost/Benefit Analysis

The average annual cost per student for all programs sampled is shown in Table 27. These costs were calculated by multiplying mean and median numbers of hours of attendance for the current students and for the former students by the average cost per student instructional hour for the current students and the former students respectively.

Table 27

Ratios of Net Income Changes for Individual Students and For Families to ABE Program Costs*

	Former Students	
	Mean	Median
Effect on Student Income		
Annual Cost Per Student	$264.00	$140.00
Net Annual Change in Income From Student Employment	(+)$795.00**	(+)$1,600.00**
Ratio of Net Income Changes to ABE Program Costs	3.01 to 1	11.43 to 1
Effect on Family Income		
Annual Cost Per Student	$264.00	$140.00
Net Annual Change in Total Family Income	(+)$ 44.00	(-) $300.00
Ratio of Net Family Income Changes to ABE Program Costs	.17 to 1	(-) 2.14 to 1

* Cost/benefit ratios calculated and shown in Table 27 were based on the cost of instruction for students interviewed.

** Over a period of from 1 to 5 years.

A cost/benefit ratio then was calculated by dividing the average annual program cost per student into the net annual change in income from student employment or, in the case of families, into the net annual change in total family income. For example, the cost/benefit ratio for former students using median data for income from student employment was 11.43 to 1. This means that for every dollar spent by the program, on average, for that student's instruction in the ABE program, the student realized a net increase in personal income of $11.43. A cost/benefit ratio could be computed for current students, but it would be negative and have little meaning because current students often are unemployed while attending an ABE program. It would be correct to conclude that ABE students experience a temporary income reduction while attending the program; however, the focus of this study was on the impact of the program subsequent to participation. Therefore, only cost/benefit ratios for former students are reported. The data in Table 25 clearly indicate substantial positive benefits accrued to former students in terms of the students' own income.

For both current and former students, expenditures, relative to increased total family income, were not cost effective. That is, the students' total family income usually was less after leaving the ABE program.

Although, in retrospect, some confusion as to what constituted "family" may have existed among students interviewed, reasons for the changes reported for total family income remain illusive. One explanation may be that as students realize economic gains after leaving the ABE program, as did the former students in this study, other family

income sources, such as a working spouse, may be viewed as less important to the family and may cease. It should also be noted that the study was undertaken during a time of economic recession.

In terms of the students' own income, the finding that one dollar invested in the ABE program resulted in increased earnings of $11.43 within the five year period following attendance clearly indicates that the ABE program is very cost effective.

IV. Student Evaluations of ABE Programs

Evaluation of the ABE programs, per se, was not a goal of this study. Students were asked, however, to volunteer comments regarding their general perceptions of the program.

Table 28

Student Evaluation Comments Regarding the ABE Program They Attended

Evaluation Categories	Comment Categories	Current Students No.	Current Students %	Former Students No.	Former Students %
Liked Best About Program	Self-Paced Instruction	48	26%	44	13%
	Freedom For Personal Growth	38	20%	59	18%
	Learning Basic Skills	33	18%	81	25%
	Program Structure	14	7%	20	6%
	Teachers	7	4%	13	4%
	Other	47	25%	108	33%
	No Response	1	<1%	3	1%
Liked Least About Program	Individual Personal Problems	37	20%	18	6%
	Single Program Component e.g. Lunches	13	7%	112	34%
	Individual Classroom Experiences	12	6%	62	19%
	Other	0	0%	77	23%
	No Response	126	67%	59	18%
Suggested Program Improvements	Improve Teaching	13	7%	10	3%
	Individual Concerns	10	5%	14	4%
	Improve Classes	6	3%	23	7%
	Other	84	45%	23	7%
	No Response	75	40%	258	79%
Additional Comments	Increased self-growth/ confidence	14	7%	16	5%
	Excellent Staff	8	4%	34	10%
	Excellent Program	6	3%	2	<1%
	Other	93	50%	87	27%
	No Response	67	36%	189	58%

Table 28 shows the data collected in the four areas for which student responses were solicited. The categories portrayed were synthesized from analysis of the students' responses.

Of interest is the varying proportions of "no response" given by students. Practically all students responded when asked what they liked best about the program, but nearly 2/3 of current students declined to comment on what they liked least. It could well be the case that these students' evaluation of the program was very positive and they simply had no critical comments to offer. An alternative explanation, however, might be a reluctance to criticize a program in which they currently are enrolled. Former students, having had more time for reflection and, perhaps, less concerned about confidentiality, were more willing to offer negative comments.

The negative comments offered by both groups of students were quite varied and seem to relate to individual student situations, and not to fundamental design, procedural or curriculum aspects of the program. A similar result occurred when students were asked how the program could be improved. Very few students singled out program elements such as teaching, and many students declined to respond.

The aspect of the program liked best, especially by current students, seemed to relate to the design and function of the program, rather than its curriculum. In other words, how they were treated as adult learners apparently was more impressive to them than the knowledge or skills gained.

In this brief evaluation section and throughout the study, a strong sense of positive regard and appreciation for the ABE program was expressed by the students.

Chapter 4

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter of the report will synthesize, interpret and draw conclusions from the data reported in Chapter 3. Additionally, some recommendations based on this study will be made.

Qualitative Impact

Students have many specific reasons for wanting to continue their education through local adult education programs, and the majority tend to be quite goal oriented. Learning for its own sake is not a major motivating force. In many instances the benefits sought from adult education are related to occupational and vocational aspirations. A number of students see their participation in adult education as but one step in a renewed involvement with education and learning. While some students had already enrolled in further educational programs at the time of the interview, the vast majority said they intended to do so in the future. Many of the kinds of educational programs, beyond the ABE program, in which the students were enrolled or in which they intended to enroll were of an occupational or vocational nature.

The self-stated goals students gave for atteding the ABE program largely were achieved by the former students. Such a self-perception of achievement could reasonably be interpreted as successful completion of the program. Beyond this reported goal achievement, however, students reported substantial improvement in basic skills, applied

practical knowledge, community participation and involvement in their childrens' education. Also reported was increased satisfaction with their personal lives in terms of improved self-concepts, self-confidence and interpersonal relationships. Examination of virtually all variables suggested an increase in the quality of life for impressive numbers of former students interviewed. Furthermore, in most instances the students attributed these benefits to their participation in the ABE program.

Often, former students indicated greater changes in their lives as a result of attending the ABE program than did current students. A reasonable interpretation of this finding is that the knowledge, skills and psychological benefits gained through involvement with the program required varying amounts of time before the impact on students' lives could fully be realized and appreciated. That the greater impact was found to have occurred among former students, as compared to current students, suggests that having attended the ABE program is positively related to the quality of students' lives. These findings further show that the major benefits from the program are realized after the student has left the program, suggesting that measures of impact evaluation taken while the student currently is attending the program are likely to be conservative, if not misleading.

Financial Impact

While the financial aspects of students' lives certainly can have a profound effect on the quality of their lives, financial considerations were looked at separately in this study. The researchers attempted to assess the financial conditions of students and their

families before ABE participation, note changes in those financial conditions, try to determine how, if at all, those changes were related to participation in the ABE program and, finally, to look at some gross measures of program costs as compared with financial benefits.

Approximately 25% of former ABE students interviewed were receiving some form of assistance from one or more government agency. The study found no major change in the percentage of students receiving assistance or in the dollar amounts received from the time they enrolled in the program until the time of the interview. Yet, over the same period of time, former students reported increases in personal income. While these two findings might seem to be inconsistent, one factor to be considered is that the increases reported for total family income are far below the increases shown for earned income by the student alone. In fact, total family income increases ranged from less than one per cent for families of former students, to an actual decrease of two per cent, as measured by means and medians respectively. A second consideration relates to factors in the larger economy, including increased cost of living and increased unemployment at the time the study was conducted.

In examining changes in students' earned income and in total family income for current students, only net losses were found. Probable reasons accounting for current students not showing gains similar to those of former students are the time demands placed on current students by the ABE program, and the time span between the interview and leaving the ABE program; a time span during which former students were

able to become employed and/or make advances within an occupation, both events leading to increased income. To the extent the ABE program enhances the employment potential of students, it is reasonable to expect former students to have realized this benefit more fully than current students. The percentage of students employed was greater at the time of the interview than at the time of enrollment in the ABE program for both groups of students. This finding, again considering the differences in circumstances and opportunity between the two groups, also suggests the gap in earned income may lessen as the current students continue through and ultimately leave the program.

A final indication that having completed the ABE program is associated with financial benefits are the data showing significant numbers of former students reporting the overall financial condition of their families to have improved since they first enrolled in the ABE program. That these reported benefits for former students far exceed those reported by current students tends to bear out the positive relationship between vocational and financial benefits to the former student and having attended the ABE program.

Costs vs. Benefits

The difficulties and limitations involved in attempting to conduct a cost/benefit analysis for this kind of educational program were noted earlier in this report; nevertheless, an attempt was made to make limited calculations.

A major problem was the ability to ascribe appropriate benefits. One recipient of benefits would be the funding agencies i.e. the federal government, and, to a lesser extent, the state government. A

cost/benefit ratio in this instance requires the calculation of direct fiscal benefits or "return on investment" to the funding source. Examples of direct benefits include reduced government assistance and increases in various tax revenues, including social security.

No significant reduction in government assistance was found in the study. Consequently, direct financial return, if it exists, would be in the form of increased revenue from students. Since an increase in personal, earned income was reported for former students, a reasonable assumption is that proportionate increases would be forthcoming in state and federal income tax, social security tax and in other forms of taxation. Calculating accurate dollar amounts in these areas, particularly without having access to appropriate documents and records such as personal tax returns, was not possible.

Therefore, cost/benefit ratios were calculated by using the average cost of instruction for students interviewed as the cost factor, and using increased income, both personal earned income and total family income, as the benefit factor. The direct financial benefit being calculated was that accruing to the student or the family. The implication, however, is that these benefits should have a subsequent, direct and roughly proportional benefit to local, state and federal governments, that is, to society. In this sense, the pattern of cost/benefit ratios are favorable and impressive. Median student income, as reported by former students, increased an average of $11.43 for every government dollar spent on instruction. Total family income, however, showed a reduction.

The implication of these calculations is clear. For the student who had completed participation in the ABE program and who, unlike the

total family, was the focus and direct beneficiary of the program, the cost/benefit ratio was very positive. Again, the argument may be posed that, under similar conditions, the current students will realize such financial benefits after having completed their participation in the program.

There are, quite probably, other financial benefits to society which are even more illusive to determine e.g. reduction in crime, punishment and the associated costs, increased productivity in business and industry, increased income in succeeding generations, and others. It is very likely impossible to ever determine accurately the total financial benefits received by the student and by society as a result of attending an ABE program; from what is known, the financial return on dollars spent suggests that the ABE program is a good investment.

Summary Conclusions

Concern with cost effectiveness should not be allowed to detract from the fact, as described earlier, that many of the benefits which appear to result from the ABE program are not of a monetary nature. The overall quality of life, in almost every dimension, seems to have improved for the students having attended and left the ABE program. As the quality of students' lives increases, so probably, does the quality of the lives of their families. What the implications are for benefits to succeeding generations and to society can only be imagined. The impact of ABE, like most other forms of education, doubtless reaches far beyond the classroom.

While the positive changes in students' lives appear to be closely associated with participation in the ABE program, the data do not permit concluding the ABE program caused these changes. As with most research of this type, only an association can be demonstrated. Even the associations were drawn from information reported by students; information which, for the most part, cannot be confirmed or validated. Yet consistent patterns in the data have been noted. The general effect reported appears plausible: participation in the ABE program has had a strong, overall positive impact on students' lives, and substantially more so on students having left the program than on students currently enrolled in the program.

Recommendations

Continued efforts to develop and refine research hypotheses, sampling techniques, instrument design, and methods of data collection and analysis for studies of this type is advised.

An additional recommendation is the need for logitudinal research in addition to cross sectional studies. Using the current students in this study as a baseline, for example, follow-up studies would likely provide insights into the nature and dynamics of the impact participation in an ABE program has on the lives of students. A further recommendation is the use of a control group consisting of individuals eligible for the ABE program, but never having attended.

Finally, the evidence presented in this study strongly indicates that adult basic education programs are effective and are beneficial to both the student and to society in a variety of important ways.

APPENDIX A

Dear Former Adult Basic Education Student,

We need your help!

Our Adult Basic Education program, Montana State University and the Office of Public Instruction in Helena all are working together on a big project. The purpose of this project is to find out how well adult education is working in Montana. This information is important in helping us keep our adult education programs and make them better.

We need to know what you think about the adult basic education program! We also would like to know how your experience in the program may have helped you.

If you would be willing to help us by answering some questions in an interview, we would be very grateful. The interview should take place within the next month, should last about 30 minutes and everything you say will be kept confidential; your name will not be used in any way without your permission.

If you can help us with this project, please complete and return the enclosed postcard. After receiving the card, we will be in touch with you.

If you would like to help, it is important that you return the card RIGHT AWAY!

Thank you.

Sincerely,

APPENDIX B

ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

IMPACT EVALUATION

Interview Questionnaire

for

Current Students

This instrument was developed
as part of a grant award from
the Division of Adult Education
of the Montana State Office
of Public Instruction.

November, 1982

ABE IMPACT EVALUATION
STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Notes to interviewers:

If more than one reason given, be sure to note the main one.

I. REASON FOR ATTENDANCE

1. What is the main reason you began attending the Adult Basic Education Program?

2. What is important about (repeat answer) to you?

3. Have you achieved your goal of (repeat answer #1) yet? YES _____ NO _____

II. EDUCATIONAL IMPACT

Examples to clarify the question might be classes, courses, whether for credit or not

1. Since you began attending the Adult Basic Education Program, have you enrolled in any other educational program?
YES _____ (Go to #2) NO _____ (why not?) (Go to #4)

2. (if yes) What kind of program?

	currently enrolled	completed	dropped out
a. Vocational/technical	_____	_____	_____
b. Two year college	_____	_____	_____
c. Four year college	_____	_____	_____
d. Adult/community ed. class for college credit	_____	_____	_____
e. Interest, not for credit	_____	_____	_____
f. Another Adult Basic Ed. Program	_____	_____	_____
g. To prepare for the GED exam	_____	_____	_____
h. To earn a high school diploma	_____	_____	_____

e) Ex: dance, pottery, etc.

f) This could be the same ABE program again.

g) The GED preparation class may also be the same program, but time must have passed between the two enrollments.

Was it a motivational factor?

3. Did your attendance in the Adult Basic Education Program have anything to do with making you want to enroll in the (repeat answer) program(s)?
   YES _____ In what way? NO _____

If needed, use the list on II-2 for prompting.

4. Do you plan to take any more courses?
   YES _____ NO_____
5. If yes, what type?

III. SKILLS ACQUIRED

1. How much would you say your skills in the following areas improved as a result of attending the Adult Basic Education Program?

	A Lot	Somewhat	Little or None
a. Math	_____	_____	_____
b. Reading	_____	_____	_____
c. Writing	_____	_____	_____
d. Communication	_____	_____	_____

d) Communication means how well you can get your ideas and opinions across to others.

2. How much would you say your knowledge in the following areas has improved as a result of attending the Adult Basic Education Program?

	A Lot	Somewhat	Little or None
a. How to find & keep a job	_____	_____	_____
b. How to get the most value for your money	_____	_____	_____
c. Your rights and responsibilities as a citizen	_____	_____	_____
d. Your knowledge about community resources	_____	_____	_____
e. Health care for yourself and your family	_____	_____	_____

a) Where to look how to apply, etc.

b) Comparative shopping, etc.

c) Legal rights, voting, etc.

d) Resources are institutions, agencies and organizations; give examples if needed

e) Staying healthy, when to see a Dr., etc.

3. How much would you say your experience in the Adult Basic Education Program has made you more likely to use the following services or participate in the following areas?

	A Lot	Somewhat	Little or None
a. use the library	____	____	____
b. read magazines, books or newspapers	____	____	____
c. participate in community organizations	____	____	____
d. vote in elections	____	____	____

At this point ask if they have school age children, K-12.

(if school age children ask "e" and "f")

e) example: PTA

e. attend meetings for parents at your child's school	____	____	____

f) example: parents night or parent/ teacher conferences.

f. to talk to teachers or principals about your children	____	____	____

4. Think back for a moment to the questions you just answered about your educational experiences and the knowledge and skills you have learned between when you first began attending Adult Basic Education classes and now.

4. Go over this slowly and clearly; make sure they understand what is being asked. Referral to prior responses may be necessary.

In general, would you say these experiences and the things you learned have changed your life?
A. For the better ___ B. For the worse ___
C. Little or no change ___

a. (If A or B) How much of a change would you say has occurred?

1. A big change ___ 2. A small change ___
3. Somewhere between ___

b. Are there things about the Adult Basic Education Program which helped bring about these changes? If so, please describe them.

Please! Write in a legible and organized fashion. Use the respondent's own words when possible.

IV. PERSONAL CHANGES

1. slow and clear
Each statement (a-f) must be asked as a sequence of questions:
1. has change occurred?
2. for better or worse?
3. how much better or worse?

1. Think about the way you feel about yourself and the way you think others feel about you. In what ways have the following areas of your personal life changed between when you first began attending the Adult Basic Education Program and now; and how much of a change would you say has occurred?

Has there been a change in (statement "a", "b", etc.)? (if yes) Has the change been for the better or the worse?

Would you say the change has been: a lot better/worse or somewhat better/worse?

Statements a-f: be ready to rephrase or interpret. Be sensitive to confusion on the part of the respondent.

Be careful not to change the meaning of these statements.

	A Lot Better	Somewhat Better	A Lot Worse	Somewhat Worse	Little or No Change	NA
a. The sense of satisfaction with your life in general	___	___	___	___	___	___
b. How well you get along with other people	___	___	___	___	___	___
c. How well you get along on your job.	___	___	___	___	___	___
d. How good you feel about yourself	___	___	___	___	___	___
e. Your general level of self-confidence	___	___	___	___	___	___
f. satisfaction with your home and family life	___	___	___	___	___	___

2. (ask only if respondent has school age children; see III-3)

Do you think your attendance in the Adult Basic Education Program has affected your school age children?
YES _____ NO _____
(if yes) Please describe changes that may have occurred in your children regarding:

a. how well you get along with each other, time spent together, etc.

a. their relationship with you

b. attitudes about school, better grades, study more, etc.

b. their educational development

c. how well they get along with others, more extroverted, etc.

c. their social development

d. in other ways

3. slow & clear

3. Think back for a moment to the questions you just answered about the personal changes which have occurred in your life between when you first began attending Adult Basic Education classes and now.

In general, would you say these changes have been:
A. For the better ____ B. For the worse ____
C. Little or no change ____

a. (if A or B) How much of a change would you say has occurred?

1. A big change ____ 2. A small change ____
3. Somewhere between ____

b. Are there things about the Adult Basic Education Program which helped bring about these changes? If so, please describe them.

V. PROGRAM EVALUATION

Try to get specific responses as much as possible. Do not refer to individuals (teachers, etc.) by name

1. What do you like BEST about the Adult Basic Education Program?

2. What do you like LEAST about the Adult Basic Education Program?

3. How could the Adult Basic Education Program be improved?

4. Finally are there any other comments or anything else you would like to say about your experience in the Adult Basic Education Program?

VI. ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Restate the promise of confidentiality.

1. Were you receiving any government financial assistance when you enrolled in the Adult Basic Education Program? YES ____ NO ____ (go to #3)

1. Examples: ADFC or ADC (aid to families with dependent children)
SSI (supplemental security income)
SSI could be disability, but not retirement, here.
VA (veterans administration)
Food Stamps, etc.

a. What kinds of assistance?	b. How much money did you receive?
1. _____	$_____ per _____
2. _____	$_____ per _____
3. _____	$_____ per _____
4. _____	$_____ per _____
5. _____	$_____ per _____

Explain that we need specific $ amounts for our cost/benefit calculations

2. Has the Adult Basic Education Program helped you reduce your dependence on government financial assistance?
YES ____ NO ____ (go to #3)

We need to know how much they were receiving per a specific time period e.g. per month

Write explanatory notes if needed.

a. What kinds of assistance?	b. How much money did you receive?
1. _____	$_____ per _____
2. _____	$_____ per _____
3. _____	$_____ per _____
4. _____	$_____ per _____
5. _____	$_____ per _____

c. How has the Adult Basic Education Program helped you to reduce your dependence on government financial assistance?

3. Were you employeed: When you enrolled in the Adult Basic Education Program? YES ____ NO ____
Are you employed now? YES ____ NO ____.

4. #4 refers to them individually.

4. (if not employed either time, go to #5) What was your ANNUAL take-home pay from the job you held:

Take-home pay is the amount on their paycheck; after deductions.

a. At the time you enrolled (if applicable)? $____ ____

b. At the job you have now (if applicable)? $_____

5. #5 refers to their family.

5. What was the TOTAL ANNUAL INCOME for your FAMILY, NOT including any government financial assistance (if applicable; see VI-1&2):

Total income could include: pensions, SSI retirement, child support, help from family or friends, dividends or interest, alimony, etc.

a. At the time you enrolled in the Adult Basic Education Program? $_____

b. At the present time? $_____

6. Has the overall financial condition, for you and your family, changed since enrolling in the Adult Basic Education Program?
YES ____ LITTLE OR NO CHANGE ____

Probe!

a. (if yes) Please describe the changes which have occurred.

VIII. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Sex & ethnic origin probably can be determined visually. If mixed ethnic origin, use the predominant or, if 50/50, use how they consider themselves.
age-begin with the approximate group.

1. Sex: Male___ Female___
2. Age: 16-17___ 41-50___
18-20___ 51-60___
21-30___ 61-70___
31-40___ over 70___

3. Ethnic Background:

White_____	Asian____
Indian____	Black____
Hispanic___	Other____

4. Residence (name of nearest town)

_____

town-living just outside town is marked as in town.

Live: in town _____ in country _____

marital status is current only.

5. Marital Status: Married _____ Unmarried _____

dependents-people living with them & receiving over ½ of their financial support or children living away but receiving ½ of financial support.

6. Dependents

No. of dependent children _____

No. of additional dependents _____

7. Education What was the highest grade you had COMPLETED at the time you enrolled in the Adult Basic Education Program?

a. Below 8th_____
8th_____
9th_____
10th_____
11th_____
12th_____
Higher_____
Unknown_____

Attendance-we want to be able to ultimately state this in terms of total # of hours of attendance

b. Since you enrolled in the Adult Basic Education Program, have you received:

a GED certificate? _____
a high school diploma?_____

Start and stop dates probably will not be available.

8. Attendance

a. When did you first begin attending the Adult Basic Education Program:_____
date month year

b. How long have you attended the Adult Basic Education Program? The number of:
hours per day ___ days per week ___ weeks___

ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

IMPACT EVALUATION

Interview Questionnaire

for

Former Students

This instrument was developed
as part of a grant award from
the Division of Adult Education
of the Montana State Office
of Public Instruction.

November, 1982

ABE IMPACT EVALUATION
STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Notes to interviewers:

If more than one reason given, be sure to note the main one.

I. REASON FOR ATTENDANCE

1. What was your main reason for attending the Adult Basic Education Program?

2. What was important about (repeat answer) to you?

3. Did you achieve your goal of (repeat answer #1)?
YES _____ NO _____ (why not?)

II. EDUCATIONAL IMPACT

Examples to clarify the question might be classes, courses, whether for credit or not

1. Since you attended the Adult Basic Education Program, have you enrolled in any other educational program?
YES _____ (Go to #2) NO _____ (why not?) (Go to #4)

2. (if yes) What kind of program?

	currently enrolled	completed	dropped out
a. Vocational/technical	_____	_____	_____
b. Two year college	_____	_____	_____
c. Four year college	_____	_____	_____
d. Adult/community ed. class for college credit	_____	_____	_____
e. Interest, not for credit	_____	_____	_____
f. Another Adult Basic Ed. Program	_____	_____	_____
g. To prepare for the GED exam	_____	_____	_____
h. To earn a high school diploma	_____	_____	_____

3) Ex: dance, pottery, etc.

f) This could be the same ABE program again.

g) The GED preparation class may also be the same program, but time must have passed between the two enrollments.

Was it a motivational factor?

3. Did your attendance in the Adult Basic Education Program have anything to do with making you want to enroll in the (repeat answer) program(s)?
   YES _____ In what way? NO _____

If needed, use the list on II-2 for prompting.

4. Do you plan to take any more courses?
   YES _____ NO _____
5. If yes, what type?

III. SKILLS ACQUIRED

1. How much would you say your skills in the following areas improved as a result of attending the Adult Basic Education Program?

	A Lot	Somewhat	Little or None
a. Math	_____	_____	_____
b. Reading	_____	_____	_____
c. Writing	_____	_____	_____
d. Communication	_____	_____	_____

d) Communication means how well you can get your ideas and opinions across to others.

2. How much would you say your knowledge in the following areas has improved as a result of attending the Adult Basic Education Program?

	A Lot	Somewhat	Little or None
a. How to find & keep a job	_____	_____	_____
b. How to get the most value for your money	_____	_____	_____
c. Your rights and responsibilities as a citizen	_____	_____	_____
d. Your knowledge about community resources	_____	_____	_____
e. Health care for yourself and your family	_____	_____	_____

a) Where to look how to apply, etc.

b) Comparative shopping, etc.

c) Legal rights, voting, etc.

d) Resources are institutions, agencies and organizations; give examples if needed

e) Staying healthy, when to see a Dr., etc.

3. How much would you say your experience in the Adult Basic Education Program has made you more likely to use the following services or participate in the following areas?

	A Lot	Somewhat	Little or None
a. use the library	____	____	____
b. read magazines, books or newspapers	____	____	____
c. participate in community organizations	____	____	____
d. vote in elections	____	____	____

At this point ask if they have school age children, K-12.

(if school age children ask "e" and "f")

e) example: PTA

e. attend meetings for parents at your child's school ____ ____ ____

f) example: parents night or parent/ teacher conferences.

f. to talk to teachers or principals about your children ____ ____ ____

4. Think back for a moment to the questions you just answered about your educational experiences and the knowledge and skills you have learned between when you first began attending Adult Basic Education classes and now.

4. Go over this slowly and clearly; make sure they understand what is being asked. Referral to prior responses may be necessary.

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A. For the better ___ B. For the worse ___
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a. The sense of satisfaction with your life in general	___	___	___	___	___	___
b. How well you get along with other people	___	___	___	___	___	___
c. How well you get along on your job.	___	___	___	___	___	___
d. How good you feel about yourself	___	___	___	___	___	___
e. Your general level of self-confidence	___	___	___	___	___	___
f. satisfaction with your home and family life	___	___	___	___	___	___

2. (ask only if respondent has school age children; see III-3)

Do you thnk your attendance in the Adult Basic Education Program has affected your school age children?
YES _____ NO _____
(if yes) Please describe changes that may have occurred in your children regarding:

a. how well you get along with each other, time spent together, etc.

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b. attitudes about school, better grades, study more, etc.

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c. how well they get along with others, more extroverted, etc.

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4. Finally are there any other comments or anything else you would like to say about your experience in the Adult Basic Education Program?

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SSI could be disability, but not retirement, here.
VA (veterans administration)
Food Stamps, etc.

Explain that we need specific $ amounts for our cost/benefit calculations

We need to know how much they were receiving per a specific time period e.g. per month

Write explanatory notes if needed.

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a. What kinds of assistance?	b. How much money did you receive?
1. _____	$_____ per _____
2. _____	$_____ per _____
3. _____	$_____ per _____
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5. _____	$_____ per _____

2. Has the Adult Basic Education Program helped you reduce your dependence on government financial assistance?
YES ____ NO ____ (go to #3)

a. What kinds of assistance?	b. How much money did you receive?
1. _____	$_____ per _____
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c. How has the Adult Basic Education Program helped you to reduce your dependence on government financial assistance?

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4. #4 refers to them individually.

4. (if not employed either time, go to #5) What was your ANNUAL take-home pay from the job you held:

Take-home pay is the amount on their paycheck; after deductions.

a. At the time you enrolled (if applicable)? $_____

b. At the job you have now (if applicable)? $_____

5. #5 refers to their family.

5. What was the TOTAL ANNUAL INCOME for your FAMILY, NOT including any government financial assistance (if applicable; see VI-1&2):

Total income could include: pensions, SSI retirement, child support, help from family or friends, dividends or interest, alimony, etc.

a. At the time you enrolled in the Adult Basic Education Program? $_____

b. At the present time? $_____

6. Has the overall financial condition, for you and your family, changed since enrolling in the Adult Basic Education Program?
YES ____ LITTLE OR NO CHANGE ____

Probe!

a. (if yes) Please describe the changes which have occurred.

VIII. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Sex & ethnic origin probably can be determined visually. If mixed ethnic origin, use the predominant or, if 50/50, use how they consider themselves.
age-begin with the approximate group.

1. Sex: Male___ Female___
2. Age: 16-17___ 41-50___
18-20___ 51-60___
21-30___ 61-70___
31-40___ over 70___

3. Ethnic Background:

White_____ Asian_____
Indian_____ Black_____
Hispanic___ Other_____

4. Residence (name of nearest town)

_____

town-living just outside town is marked as in town.

Live: in town _____ in country _____

marital status is current only.

5. Marital Status: Married _____ Unmarried _____

dependents-people living with them & receiving over ½ of their financial support or children living away but receiving ½ of financial support.

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No. of dependent children _____

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7. Education What was the highest grade you had COMPLETED at the time you enrolled in the Adult Basic Education Program?

a. Below 8th_____
8th_____
9th_____
10th_____
11th_____
12th_____
Higher_____
Unknown_____

Attendance-we want to be able to ultimately state this in terms of total # of hours of attendance

b. Since you enrolled in the Adult Basic Education Program, have you received:

a GED certificate? _____
a high school diploma?_____

Start and stop dates probably will not be available.

8. Attendance

a. When did you first begin attending the Adult Basic Education Program?_____
date month year

b. When did you stop attending the Adult Basic Education Program? _____
date month year

c. How long have you attended the Adult Basic Education Program? The number of:
hours per day ___ days per week ___ weeks___

#2/B